



UPCOUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

RE: Pending Council Bill 29-11, *Boards, Committees, and Commissions -Sunset, Consolidation and Resolution to sunset or repeal certain boards, committees, and commissions*

It is human nature to want to be recognized, heard and have one's views considered.
(Erick Wulff, 1995)

From the Montgomery County Boards, Committees, and Commissions Policies and Procedures, "Public participation in boards, committees, and commissions contributes to the work of County government and provides a valuable service to the community by presenting the concerns and viewpoints of County residents on a variety of issues."

Rationale for supporting the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board (UCAB)

- The UCAB has a unique and specific purpose—To “*Review and comment, within statutory requirements and guidelines, proposed zoning amendments and section map amendments, master plans and related plan amendments, six year capital improvements program (CIP) of County and bi-County agencies, operating budgets of County and bi-County agencies; health and human service matters, land acquisition by County and other government agencies, location and design of fire stations, schools, recreation centers, libraries and other government buildings and facilities, transportation routes, schedules and services within the County, including school busing, and all other matters coming before the County government for decision which relate to, or affect, the Upcounty Center's service area. Advise the Director of the Upcounty Center in identifying demographic, economic and social patterns in the area.*”
- Boards and committees, such as the UCAB, provide a cost effective public forum for the County to disseminate information about its programs, services, and policies and to gather public opinion about county programs, services and policies.
- The UCAB allows county staff to engage the broader community at the grass-roots level on important issues.
- The UCAB studies critical issues, makes public testimony, performs independent research, and reviews staff reports and recommendations. These activities prepare the UCAB to discuss, analyze, formulate, and forward well-developed, thoughtful recommendations to the County Executive and Council.

- The UCAB provides costs savings to the County because Board/Committee members, with significant breadth of experience in their respective fields of professional knowledge, volunteer their time to discuss issues and provide feedback to the County Executive and Council. Without the benefit of Boards/Committees, this same information would cost the county additional resources by using more staff and/or consultants.
- The UCAB is a well run, effective board. Attendance continues to be high by boardmembers, community members and county/state officials. Members are recruited to form a diverse representation on the Board and for overall community representation at meetings.
- The UCAB works collaboratively with other regional Boards, commissions and committees to develop partnerships and collaborative solutions to mutual issues and concerns. The proposal to merge or eliminate Boards and Committees is regressive—a step back from good public policy that engages its citizenry in the everyday functioning of the county government.
- The UCAB promotes public service. Participation as a member of a board or committee engages an individual in public service in local government and can provide a ‘training ground’ for individuals who may subsequently progress to serve as county officials or run for political office.
- The UCAB helps county government meet increased demands and expectations for responsiveness and accountability.
- The activities of the UCAB can promote a creative dialogue among citizens to bring fresh ideas and innovations to the attention of county leadership

Recent examples of UCAB contributions and accomplishment to Montgomery County citizens include:

- A citizen (Mr. Gabe Chikes) approached the UCAB with concerns that he and his neighbors had about street lights and roadway conditions—both of which are potential safety hazards. He had been unsuccessful in getting his concerns through the normal channels of communication despite several years of trying. The UCAB and Upcounty Regional Services staff agreed to follow up on the citizen’s concerns. The citizen recently wrote back to the UCAB,

“I believe it has been about six weeks since I was last at one of the UCAB meetings. At that time I mentioned two concerns my neighbors and I had related to lights and roadway conditions both related to Mateny Rd between Clopper and Great Seneca Highway (GSH). I wanted to write to provide an update.

First, I want to thank Nancy Hislop who did as she said she would and followed-up with me on both matters either making inquiries or referrals. In the case of both matters, I am pleased to report positive responses and actions. The street lights along this stretch Mateny Rd are all lit - for the first time in my memory! DOT streetlights even to the extra step of coordinating a stubborn request for service from Pepco to fix the set of lights alongside of the McDonalds at the corner of Mateny and GSH. The lighting will now make the sidewalks and bus-stops more secure and provide driver's greater opportunity to recognize and react to roadway conditions and obstacles (we have a great number of deer crossing the road). In regard to the condition of the Mateny roadbed between Clopper and Dairymaid roads, Ms. Hislop was instrumental in ensuring I had an opportunity to speak

with Keith Compton, chief of the Highway Services Division of MoCo DOT. Mr. Compton acknowledged the community perception/observation that the roadway has never been resurfaced or rebuilt in over 32 years! He provided a reasonable explanation for how that could happen and then assured me he would do what he can to improve the condition of the road before the scheduled roadway work in FY 2014.

Thanks for hearing my concerns and thanks also to the staff for acting on them. It is encouraging to know that while we in Germantown are an unincorporated city, the existence of the UCAB and your willingness and that of your colleagues to serve on it provides a vehicle for the receipt, transmission and in this case resolution of citizen concerns."

- Facilitated two lively discussions on the County Executive's proposed curfew bill resulting in a letter of community support for the bill;
- Provided citizen input on the proposed FY2013-2018 Capital Improvements Budget;
- Hosted the County Executive's only upcounty town hall meeting to discuss the FY 2013 budget. Provided citizen input on the proposed FY2013 Operations Budget;
- Brought citizens' concerns to a panel consisting of a state senator and six state delegates. Issues brought forward concerned assistance for transportation projects (including CCT), Clarksburg projects, and concerns about Plan Maryland;
- Raised awareness of local citizens' opposition to proposed changes in the MARC commuter train operations schedule; and
- Agreed to fully support recommendations brought forward by the Latino Youth Collaboration Committee.

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